

# CATALYST

## Covering AOD Issues in the Collegiate Press

by Laura Gomberg

Campus newspapers generally have large readerships and strong credibility among students. Student editors are in a position to influence student attitudes and behaviors with regard to alcohol use. Broad coverage of alcohol issues, including environmental factors, by the collegiate press may contribute to changes on campus.

College and university newspapers routinely cover alcohol and other drug topics but rarely frame them in ways that inform students about the role the environment plays in alcohol problems on campus, nor do they influence students to play an active role in changing that environment.

Some student editors have seized opportunities to exercise their editorial control over how issues are covered in their papers. For example, following the 1997 alcohol poisoning death of Benjamin Wynne at Louisiana State University, its paper, *The Reveille*, not only provided extensive coverage of the events surrounding the death but also investigated other issues concerning drinking on campus. Under direction from then Editor-in-Chief Linus Lee, reporters followed up on the Greek system's response to Wynne's death and any plans to address high-risk drinking. *The Reveille* also reported on damage to the university's reputation as a result of the incident and encouraged ongoing dialogue on its op-ed page. Similarly, under the leadership of Editor-in-Chief Jason Conti, the University of Virginia's *Cavalier Daily* covered activities of a task force convened in response to the alcohol-related deaths of five college students in that state.

Student journalists can initiate articles covering alcohol and other drug issues not only in response to tragedy but also in response to perceived community need. This "community journalism" addresses topics that are important to the community—such as alcohol and drug use and prevention on campus—in order to inform students, stimulate debate, and shape public opinion.

Campus administrators and advisors can encourage student journalists to exert their influence in a way that

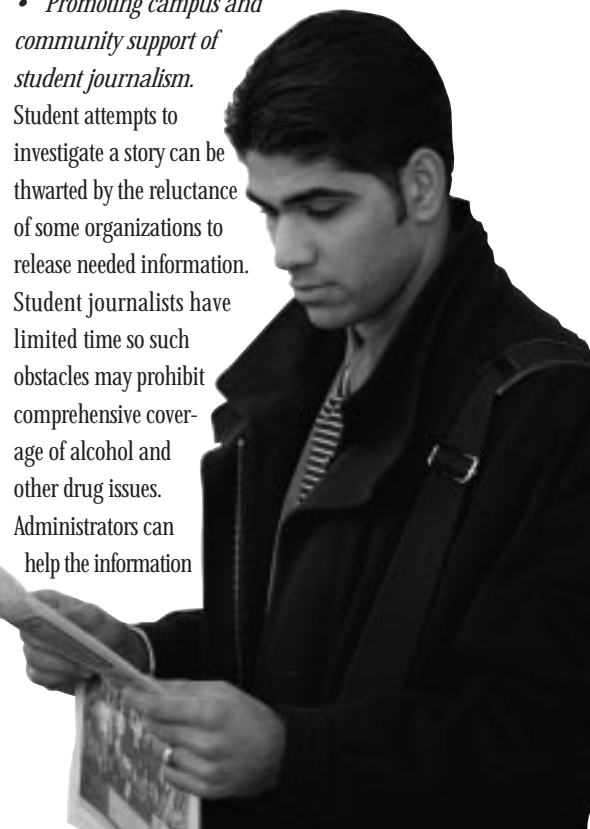
supports problem reduction and prevention. They can do so by forming relationships with student editors and journalists, encouraging campus and community organizations to cooperate with student journalists, and encouraging editors to select articles that build a climate of support for environmental change.

- *Building relationships:* Editors of campus newspapers change annually, so administrators hoping to influence how alcohol and other drug issues are covered need to develop trusting, respectful relationships with student journalists on an ongoing basis. Each editor brings different ideas, agendas, and skills to the table, so administrators need to be flexible in working with new editors. They must also respect the paper's mission to report news and remember that student newspapers are a legitimate, independent press and not simply a public relations tool for the university.

- *Promoting campus and community support of student journalism.*

Student attempts to investigate a story can be thwarted by the reluctance of some organizations to release needed information. Student journalists have limited time so such obstacles may prohibit comprehensive coverage of alcohol and other drug issues.

Administrators can help the information





## AOD Issues in the Collegiate Press, continued

flow by opening lines of communication between student journalists and campus and community organizations. Access to information helps students report on issues in a timely and accurate manner. By promoting coverage of alcohol and other drug issues on campus, administrators may encourage working relationships between student journalists and campus and community organizations.

- *Encouraging an environmental approach to reporting.* Administrators can broaden consideration of campus problems and responses by encouraging student journalists to cover alcohol and other drug issues from an environmental management approach. By helping student journalists identify topics that address community needs and frame articles in an environmental perspective, administrators can help create a climate that supports policy change on campus.

The suggestions in the sidebar can encourage student editors to take a broader view when reporting on alcohol and other drug issues on campus.

These guidelines, while not all-inclusive, provide some ways that administrators can encourage student editors and journalists to frame issues to meet community needs, stimulate debate, and help shape public opinion.

Student journalists, particularly editors, can play a leading role that should not be underestimated in encouraging students to reexamine the environment in which they make drinking decisions. With some effort, administrators can work with the campus press to help promote social and policy change on campus.

*Laura Gomberg, M.S., is a research assistant at the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention.*

### Guidelines for Student Editors

- Focus on factors that contribute to alcohol problems. Many campus newspapers focus on negative consequences associated with high-risk drinking, but do little to shed light on the factors that lead to or encourage this behavior. By including information on the physical, social, legal, and economic environment surrounding alcohol use, editors can raise student and faculty awareness of how these factors contribute to high-risk drinking and alcohol problems.
- Frame stories from a social norms perspective. News stories generally report on the numbers of students who do drink, rather than the numbers of students who do not drink. Nationally, the majority of students abstain from high-risk drinking, and few use illicit drugs. By reporting on the numbers of students who choose not to drink or use drugs, student journalists may help shift norms from those that favor use to ones that favor nonuse.
- Feature prevention and intervention strategies. All too often newspaper stories feature alcohol only when negative consequences associated with high-risk drinking—such as injury, assault, or death—have occurred. While it is important to report on these events, articles on prevention and intervention strategies raise awareness about programs aimed at preventing high-risk drinking and about services available for students seeking help.
- Link high-risk drinking with negative outcomes. Newspapers frequently report on incidents of sexual assault and violence, yet rarely link these negative consequences to alcohol use. Alcohol and violence, as well as other negative consequences, are often linked. Articles that report on this connection may promote discussion and a climate of support for policy change.
- Report on blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels. Many students are unaware of how, at various BAC levels, alcohol affects their ability to function. Articles that report on how to gauge BAC levels and those that include the BAC levels of students arrested, injured, or killed in alcohol-related incidents may help students avoid high-risk drinking.
- Describe the monetary costs associated with high-risk drinking. In addition to the direct costs associated with purchasing alcohol (overall student expenditures on alcohol and other drugs exceed what is spent on books), alcohol use accounts for increased costs to the college in terms of law enforcement, health services, and repairs due to vandalism. Articles on these topics may increase student perceptions that change is necessary.
- Use public service announcements. Campus editors can include public service announcements with messages tailored to address student needs, raise awareness, and promote a climate for change.
- Promote discussion of alcohol advertising. College-oriented marketing of alcoholic beverages—such as deep price discounts—promotes high-risk drinking. Editors can play an important role in challenging the acceptance of such advertising on campus and in their newspapers.

# Violence on Campus

## The Alcohol Link

by Robert Parker

**Editor's Note:** The following is based on a talk by Robert Parker, Ph.D., at the 1998 National Meeting on Alcohol, Other Drug, and Violence Prevention in Higher Education. Parker is the director of the Robert Presley Center for Crime and Justice Studies at the University of California at Riverside.

**P**reventing Crime  
—What Works,  
What Doesn't,

What's Promising is a report published in 1997 that was commissioned by the U.S. Congress and produced by Professor Larry Sherman of the University of Maryland at College Park. As an educator, I was shocked to read in this report that traditional health education strategies don't work very well with regard to preventing drug and alcohol use and abuse and, by extension, to the problems of violence prevention.

But as an educator, I—like you—am not going to give up. I'm going to keep trying to make those programs more effective. The report does provide advice about how to do those things that seem promising.

However, what we need to take away from this report, as reluctantly as we may wish to as educators, is the point that education is not the only thing, and perhaps not even the most important thing, that we can do to prevent alcohol-related violence on and near our campuses.

If this strategy that we're all committed to is going to have limited impact, then what can we do instead? The research from the last 5 to 10 years on the impact of alcohol availability on violence is very important.



FACE (Facing Alcohol Concerns through Education)

First of all, a number of studies have shown that availability of alcohol increases violence. Second, others and I have conducted research that shows that consumption directly increases youth homicides. These evaluations looked at periods when consumption has been increasing and when it has been decreasing and found a fairly consistent effect over time.

The third finding is on responsible beverage service. Research now shows that these policies and practices reduce intoxication. When someone leaves an establishment that's run under the auspices of responsible beverage service, they're less likely to be intoxicated than when leaving an estab-

lishment that's not run that way.

What, then, are the implications for these findings for campus prevention?

One thing that's paramount in my mind is the need to eliminate on-campus alcohol sales. Many campuses have long traditions of a favorite bar located in the student union or somewhere else on campus that all the students and the faculty like to frequent. But, in the context of the problem that we're concerned about, we cannot tolerate the sanctioning of

## Core Findings on Violence

*Alcohol and Drugs on American College Campuses: Issues of Violence and Harassment*, a report published by the Core Institute at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, describes violence on campuses based on surveys from 89,874 students at 171 institutions.

- Almost one out of two students (43 percent) report that they had experienced various forms of violence in the previous year, including threats of violence, actual physical violence, theft involving force or threat of force, forced sexual touching, unwanted intercourse, and ethnic or racial harassment. A high percentage of students were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs during these episodes, especially in incidents of unwanted sexual intercourse (79 percent), forced sexual touching (71 percent), actual physical violence (64 percent), and threats of physical violence (51 percent).
- Students who engage in "binge drinking" were 3.5 times more likely than their non-"bingeing" counterparts to be victims of physical violence. Also, "binge drinkers" were nearly three times more likely to endure unwanted sexual intercourse than were non-"bingers" and more than twice as likely to have experienced forced sexual touching.
- Half the students (49 percent) reported that alcohol and drug use by fellow students interfered with their quality of life on campus, by interrupting studying (29 percent), messing up their space (25 percent), making them feel unsafe (22 percent), preventing enjoyment of events (19 percent), and adversely affecting group activities (12 percent).

Students' beliefs about alcohol use appear to create "positive" norms and expectations. For example, roughly two-thirds of the students believe alcohol breaks the ice, enhances social activity, and gives people something to do. About half the students (including 57 percent of males and 41 percent of females) believe that drinking facilitates sexual opportunities, which can be a setup for serious personal difficulties, including sexual assault, unwanted pregnancies, and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV infection.

The report was developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For additional information, contact the Core Institute, Student Health Program, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901 or visit Core's Website ([www.sui.edu/departments/coreinst/](http://www.sui.edu/departments/coreinst/)).

Continued p. 4, "Violence"



# H.R. 6: The Higher Education Amendments

## Implications for Prevention

On October 7, 1998, President Clinton signed into law H.R. 6, the Higher Education Amendments. This large package of federal education legislation contains a number of provisions that may offer assistance to college and university student drinking and other drug use prevention efforts, as well as to campus violence and crime

prevention. Examples of specific provisions related to prevention include *The College Initiative to Reduce*



*Binge Drinking and Illegal Alcohol Consumption* (Section 119) and *Grants to Combat Violent Crimes Against Women on Campuses* (Section 826).

The Center has posted a summary of the provisions specifically related to alcohol, other drugs, violence, and

crime prevention on its Website. Just click on "publications" on our homepage

([www.edc.org/hec/](http://www.edc.org/hec/)). See the full text of H.R. 6, as well as other supporting and analytic documents on the U.S. Department of Education's Website:

[www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/PPI/Reauthor/](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/PPI/Reauthor/)

Other Web sources of information include **THOMAS—Legislative Information on the Internet**, a free service of the Library of Congress, at <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas2.html> and **Security On Campus, Inc. (S.O.C.)**, a comprehensive Website devoted to campus crime and violence, at [www.soconline.org/](http://www.soconline.org/)

## Violence on Campus Alcohol Link, continued

alcohol sales on our campuses. That is the number one priority that we should adopt to reduce the exposure to the dangerousness of alcohol and violence.

Second, we need to work to reduce the availability of alcohol near the campus. Campuses attract a lot of economic activity, including alcohol sales, bars, and so on. Now, we have to be sensitive to the needs of the community and the economic impact of policies. However, reducing alcohol availability near campus is an important factor in reducing the chances that college presidents are going to have to call parents to say that a tragedy has happened.

Third, we can establish better ties with the community and merchants to enforce a couple of things that are already on the books, such as the minimum drinking age. We need to work with

merchants and law enforcement to increase the enforcement of the minimum drinking age. That will have a big impact. We can also help stimulate interest and participation in responsible beverage service training.

What do we need to do in a larger sense in terms of the research that's not been done? We don't have a lot of the detailed information that we need from research about, for example, the relationship between alcohol, other drugs, and sexual violence. We need the details of those incidents: how they happened, what role alcohol and other drugs played in them, and how we can intervene to prevent such incidents. We also need to do more evaluation of environmental impacts, such as policies that change the availability of and access to alcohol.

Finally, we need to work with our communi-

ties where our campuses are located for better enforcement of existing rules and codes of conduct. This is particularly important on campus. We all have codes of conduct that prohibit or provide sanctions for alcohol-related or other kinds of violence such as sexual violence, assault. And yet, so many cases never even reach our judicial processes on campus. Those that do are often treated leniently, particularly when athletes from major sports teams are involved.

We have to push our campuses, despite the unpopularity of it, to send a message to every student that if you break the rules you will be treated fairly but seriously, and we will take sanctions against you. We are not sending that message clearly enough.

# Bridging the Gap

## Research and Prevention on Campus

**“T**oday, a great disconnect in substance abuse prevention is the gap between research and practice,”

said Karol Kumpfer, Ph.D., director of the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, at the U.S. Department of Education’s 12th Annual National Meeting on Alcohol, Other Drug, and Violence Prevention in Higher Education in October 1998.

For Kumpfer, an important role for CSAP is to build a bridge between research and practice. That means providing greater opportunities for people to interact more, with more connection between communities and more connections between campuses.

Kumpfer encouraged those working at colleges and universities to support the evaluation of their prevention efforts and to publish their findings.

“It’s amazing that at colleges and universities we have not had as many major researchers looking at this issue and getting their findings published,” she said.

According to Kumpfer, one way to learn more about what works in prevention at colleges and universities is to encourage faculty members who conduct research to study ways of improving the quality of student life on their campus.

### Campus-Based Prevention

One faculty researcher who has undertaken this challenge is H. Wesley Perkins, Ph.D., a sociology professor at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. Over the past decade he has been testing his theories on how perceptions of social norms affect drinking behavior of students on his campus and has published his findings widely.

Perkins, a keynote speaker at the National Meeting, says that most prevention strategies have not had much positive effect on reducing collegiate alcohol abuse. But one approach—the

reduction of misperceptions about peer drinking norms—has shown particular promise at colleges and universities.

“Pervasive misperceptions exist on most college campuses. Students typically believe that campus drug norms are more permissive than is really the case among peers, even when the actual levels of use are quite high,” explained Perkins. If students believe that others are drinking more than they really are, those misperceptions can influence drinking behavior.

In 1996, with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Hobart and William Smith Colleges launched a new prevention program to reduce misperceptions about student alcohol and other drug norms by developing an integrated academic and social climate characterized by a more realistic awareness of peer disapproval of alcohol and other drug use.

***“Life is full of golden opportunities carefully disguised as irresolvable problems.”***

The project included print media advertisements and poster campaigns, orientation program lectures, residence life workshops, and electronic communications with messages to reduce misperceptions of norms. These efforts were enhanced by linking them to various curricular initiatives and to the participation of students in an interdisciplinary course on alcohol use and abuse.

After 18 months of prevention activities, student surveys found that problems related to drinking decreased. For example, property damage related to drinking declined 36 percent, and missed classes dropped 31 percent. And the rate of frequent “binge drinking”—having five or more drinks on a single occasion—declined by 21 percent.

Perkins pointed out that other campuses using the approach of reducing misperceptions have had similar reductions in high-risk drinking. For example, after two years of activities to correct misperceptions of drinking norms at the University of Arizona, “binge drinking” rates went down by 21 percent. Similar successes in reducing high-risk drinking through this approach were achieved at Western Washington University and Northern Illinois University.

### Communicating with the American People

Surgeon General David Satcher, who also spoke at the National Meeting, explained that one of the most important functions of the surgeon general is to communicate directly with the American people “based on the best available science, not politics, not personal opinions, and not religion.”

Over the years the office has probably been best known for its reports to the nation, such as the influential 1964 *Surgeon General’s Report on Smoking and Health* by Luther Terry.

“Since that time there have been 50 *Surgeon General’s Reports*. In fact, there have about 28 reports dealing with smoking alone. Yet in all those years, there has never been a report on alcohol—not one—with the exception of a 1988 report on drunk driving.

“That tells us something. I think alcohol tends to get lost between tobacco and marijuana and illicit drugs. It’s unfortunate and we have to change that because alcohol is a very critical issue for us today,” said Satcher.

As for alcohol, other drug, and violence prevention, Satcher said that those who are working on prevention at college campuses probably agree with former Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare John Gardner, who said: “Life is full of golden opportunities carefully disguised as irresolvable problems.”

But Satcher believes that there is hope. “The news is not all bad. We know that to combat the ravages of alcohol in our society we must educate, we must motivate, and we must mobilize people and communities about the consequences of irresponsible drinking.

“We know of several things that work. We can help parents by strictly enforcing the minimum age for alcohol sale laws. We can reduce alcohol advertising and marketing campaigns that appeal to youth. We can end the promotion of college athletics by alcoholic beverages [companies]. We can set personal examples for our children by appropriate drinking behaviors and being positive role models,” he said.

For additional information about the National Meeting visit the Center’s Website ([www.edc.org/hec/](http://www.edc.org/hec/)).

# Alcohol and Student Disrup

The scenario is all too familiar. Students are partying and the booze is flowing. Some of the students are of legal drinking age, some are not. The partying gets out of hand. Police arrive. Things turn ugly—violence, injuries, property damage, arrests.

What the media have been quick to label as “student riots” moved like an epidemic across the higher education scene in the spring of 1998. On some campuses the odor of tear gas was in the air for the first time since the antiwar demonstrations of the Vietnam era. Some alcohol-fueled disruptions have emerged as an offshoot of the effort by colleges and universities to reduce heavy drinking by their students.

According to a summary published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, a number of campuses have recently experienced alcohol-related skirmishes.

At Michigan State University police used tear gas to disperse more than 2,000 students whose rioting began with a demonstration against a ban on drinking at a site popular for tailgate parties before and after football games.

At Washington State University students went on a five-hour rampage after a ban on alcohol was imposed on fraternity social

functions. At Plymouth State College in New Hampshire a crowd of more than 500 threw rocks and beer bottles at police trying to deal with drunken behavior during the annual “Spring Fling.” Similar incidents at other institutions involved alcohol, as fuel for disorderly behavior, as a policy issue sparking student protests, or both.

As with schoolyard fistfights, the aftermath has included accusations and counter-accusations over “who started it.” What is clear, however, is that attempts by colleges and universities to rein in the drinking behavior of students may require a more deliberative process than simply laying down the law. Some administrators concede that students need to be given greater participation in the process of considering and adopting rules aimed at controlling their own behavior. In trying to curb the kind of heavy drinking that has resulted in some highly publicized deaths

from alcohol poisoning, administrators and enforcement officials may be unwittingly setting the stage for protest demonstrations that easily get out of control.

At times, however, riots seem to occur for no reason other than that students have been drinking en masse. At Penn State in July, a crowd of 1,500 students and nonstudents at an off-campus art festival did more than \$100,000 worth of damage to public facilities

***“It is clear to me that students feel a lack of input into the university’s decision-making process.”***

before 150 police officers from six departments broke up the rioting. Penn State President Graham Spanier, who has gained distinction for confronting the alcohol problem on his campus in

recent years, picked up the support of the governor of Pennsylvania after the July rioting. “This isn’t a Penn State problem,” said Governor Tom Ridge. “It’s a cultural problem, a community problem, an American problem.”

Michael Haines of the University Health Service at Northern Illinois University blames such rioting on the recent wave of crackdowns on student drinking

and questions the wisdom of the national policy raising the legal drinking age from 18 to 21. There has been little support, however, for the idea that students need more rather than less freedom to drink. Thomas Goodale, an education professor at the College of



William and Mary in Virginia, believes the problem may get worse before it gets better. “We’re going to have a lot more of this for a period of time, until we move from being a laissez-faire environment to one where students are held more accountable for their behavior.”

Holding students accountable for their behavior



# tions on Campus

by Robert Zimmerman

emerges as a theme in efforts on some campuses. One approach is to involve students to a greater extent in developing the policies and rules that govern alcohol availability and consumption. At Iowa State University an annual spring festival that has seen heavy drinking

"If the students are serious partners in this they'll work very hard," says Chuck Cychosz, Ph.D., of Iowa State's Department of Public Safety. "If they think they're being manipulated, that's another matter. They're pretty quick to pick up on that."

Cychosz also believes that making on-campus alcohol policies credible and acceptable may depend on whether the surrounding community is equally concerned about alcohol problems and is diligent in enforcing its own laws. During Iowa State's 1998 "Veisha" weekend, bars in Ames agreed not to offer any "specials" of the kind that had made beer cheaper than soft drinks during these festivities in other years.

More often than not, student disturbances start small. "It really doesn't take much to get one

going," says Cychosz. "Typically you have a small group involved in an altercation and a large group standing around watching because it's bizarre and entertaining. It presents a real challenge to the community and the police to keep it contained."

The rioting at Michigan State has led to an all-out effort to change the "alcohol climate" on and around

the campus. A 30-member Action Team with a heavy representation of students spent the summer discussing policy issues that underlie the way students and the community approach alcohol problems and drawing up recommendations for prevention strategies. In addition to students, the Action Team includes staff and faculty representatives, alumni and parents, chiefs of both the campus and East Lansing police departments, representatives of the business community, the media, the public school system, and the county health department.

Significantly, Michigan State President McPherson and student members of the Action Team addressed separate open letters to students at the beginning of the fall term explaining the process that led to the wide-ranging proposals that students were being asked to review and discuss. Every effort was made to avoid the impression that the Action Team was a tool of the school administration. The proposals, labeled as "strategies to consider," included establishing new lines of communication between students and the East Lansing community and changes in MSU's academic and social environment designed to discourage high-risk drinking and encourage healthy lifestyles.

"It is clear to me that students feel a lack of input into the university's decision-making process," McPherson said in his letter. "Over the next year, I will be reaching out to all parts of the campus to listen to your concerns." The Action Team is using an Internet Web page to circulate the array of policy recommendations and solicit comments. Public forums on and off the campus also were scheduled.

*Robert Zimmerman, a freelance writer based in San Diego, is the founding editor of Prevention File: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs.*



AP Photo/David McCreery

and disorder in the past was conducted alcohol free in 1998. Under a threat from campus administration that the event would not take place unless changes were made, students were drawn into a long and painstaking planning process, including advance media coverage that stated that drinking would be taboo and outsiders would not be welcome.

## What to Do? Public Says “Get Tough”

The American public supports tougher policies to prevent underage drinking, according to a recent national opinion poll commissioned by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

Of the 7,000 people surveyed, 89 percent support restrictions on drinking in parks, public places, and college campuses; 67 percent support a ban on liquor advertising on television; and 77 percent support restricting drinking in sports stadiums.

Eighty-two percent say they would support a 5-cents-per-drink increase in alcohol taxes to pay for programs to stop minors from drinking and to increase the number of alcohol treatment programs.

More than half said they favored restrictions on alcohol advertising, with 63 percent supporting a ban on billboard advertising of alcohol, 67 percent wanting a ban on the use of cartoons or youth-oriented music, and 59 percent favoring a ban on using sports teams or athletes in advertising. More than 80 percent say stores and bars are too lax in keeping young people from buying alcoholic beverages, and 83 percent support penalties for adults who buy alcohol for minors.

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., conducted the survey. For additional information on the survey, visit the RWJF Website ([www.rwjf.org/media/10-05-98](http://www.rwjf.org/media/10-05-98)).

# Survey Findings

## Some Good News . . . and Some Bad News

College students continue to drink at alarmingly high levels, according to the most recent survey from the Harvard School of Public Health.

The 1997 survey repeated a 1993 study and found strikingly similar results at 116 campuses in 39 states on “binge drinking” behavior—defined by the researchers as the consumption of at least five drinks on a single occasion for men or four drinks on a single occasion for women. Study director Henry Wechsler, Ph.D., found that

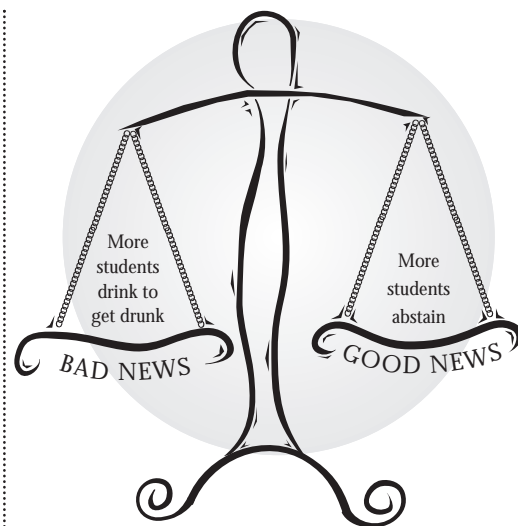
- two out of five students (42.7 percent) were “binge drinkers”
- one out of five (20.7 percent) was a frequent “binge drinker”
- four out of five (81.1 percent) of those living in fraternity or sorority houses were “binge drinkers”

“There does not seem to be a major change, but in fact, an intensification among drinkers,” Wechsler said when the study was released. The report found that more students who consumed alcohol did so to get drunk—39 percent in 1993, compared with 52 percent in 1997. And the number of students who were drunk three or more times in the month prior to answering the survey jumped by 22 percent over 1993 levels.

Frequent “binge drinkers,” defined as those who drank heavily three or more times during the two-week period before the survey, reported the highest level of problems related to alcohol consumption. They were at least eight times as likely to miss a class, fall behind in their schoolwork, experience blackouts, become injured, and/or damage property, researchers said.

However, the proportion of college students abstaining from alcohol has increased to 19 percent since 1993, when only 15.6 percent of students claimed not to drink, prompting Wechsler to say that there is a “glimmer of hope.”

William DeJong, Ph.D., a lecturer in the Harvard School of Public Health and director of the Higher Education Center, agrees that the news from the Harvard survey is not all good, but says



that it is certainly not as bleak as the press headlines suggested when the findings were released.

“The heaviest drinkers are indeed drinking more, but the dangerous behavior of this minority should not overshadow the fact that the vast majority of students are not part of the campus *binge-and-barf* scene,” he said.

### A Greek Problem?

The 1997 Harvard report confirmed that fraternity and sorority members were the biggest drinkers on campus. Four out of five of these students qualified as “binge drinkers.”

A 1997 report from the Core Institute at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale found that fraternity and sorority leaders led the pack when it comes to drinking. For example:

- 74 percent of fraternity leaders reported episodes of “binge drinking” in the previous two weeks and leaders on average consumed 14 drinks a week. Sorority leaders reported a 55 percent “binge drinking” rate and on average consumed six drinks per week.
- For actively involved fraternity members (non-leaders), 73 percent reported “binge drinking” episodes and an average consumption of 12 drinks per week. For actively involved sorority members, the numbers were 57 percent and six drinks, respectively.

*Continued p. 11, “Survey Findings”*



# Focus on Arizona and Utah

*Edited by Regional Coordinator Koreen Johannessen, director of Health Promotion and Preventive Services at the University of Arizona*

## Influencing the Drinking Culture at the University of Arizona

by Koreen Johannessen

The University of Arizona in Tucson is happy to report that heavy drinking has been declining steadily since 1995.

According to the current Core Survey the rate of high-risk drinking (consuming five or more drinks on any one occasion in the previous two weeks) is at an all time low of 31 percent for undergraduates.

The University has been studying ways to influence the campus drinking culture and reduce alcohol-related incidents. Aided by federal funds to demonstrate, evaluate, and fine-tune new strategies, the Campus Health Services prevention staff have focused on three approaches:

- A social norms media campaign
- Campus and community coalition initiatives
- Alcohol moderation skills training

Social influence theory and social norming are at the heart of all three strategies. Social marketing techniques are crucial to getting out the primary message that most students drink less than is commonly believed by other students, drink safely, and are a danger neither to themselves or others.

Most students support and endorse efforts for community safety but do not support rules and laws that mandate abstinence. With this information in mind, project staff created the "4 or Fewer" newspaper ad campaign, started educating and influencing key stakeholders who in turn create risk-reducing policies and practices, and reached out to the university's small high-risk population with skills training to



students in residence halls and Greek housing in the past two years.

The media campaign is based on the research of H. Wesley Perkins, Ph.D., at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, and his colleague Alan Berkowitz, Ph.D., a research consultant based in New York, as well as the experiences of Michael Haines at Northern Illinois University.

Perkins and Berkowitz found that college students routinely overestimate the drinking of their peers.

Student surveys at the University of Arizona showed the same phenomenon. A 1995 survey found that 65 percent of students thought their peers consumed six or more drinks in a typical night, while only 32 percent reported drinking at that level. Exposing students to the actual drinking norms resulted in significant decreases not only in the

specifically alter harmful drinking and drugging behavior patterns and increase resiliency. Surveys show that, as a result of these efforts, high-risk drinking has been reduced by 29 percent in the general undergraduate population in the past three years and by 22 percent for

## NETWORK OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES Committed To The Elimination Of Drug And Alcohol Abuse

percentage of students who reported having five or more drinks at a sitting sometime in the previous two weeks but also in 30-day use rates. Perhaps most important, the survey found substantial declines in almost all reported negative consequences related to alcohol consumption.

The media campaign uses the school newspaper, the *Arizona Daily Wildcat*, because it has a circulation of 20,000 students per day and most students read it at least once or twice per week. All normative message advertisements are designed, as they are at Northern Illinois, to be positive, inclusive, and empowering. Three-by-eight-inch ads are published once or twice per week. This public health strategy is both cost effective and sensible, especially for a large campus.

Compared with traditional educational approaches, it would take more than 62 health educator or peer educator workshops per week, for 16 weeks, to reach the same number of students the *Wildcat* reaches each day, and we would only reach them once.

Community change has also been important. We are bringing students and officials together with community representatives from law enforcement, city and county government, the liquor control board, business, and neighborhood associations to work on substance use issues that recognize common ground. That includes safer neighborhoods, restaurants, and drinking establishments; promotion of safe drinking practices that discourage ritual drinking (such as 21 drinks upon turning 21) and encourage moderate drinking (defined at the U of A as one drink per hour) for those who drink; and swift and consistent enforcement of the law. These are policies that most students can support because they are consistent with student drinking norms. It means rules that make sense to the majority of students, rules that reduce risk, and rules that minimize harm.

*Continued p. 10, "Influencing"*

# Focus on Arizona and Utah . . . continued

## Influencing, continued

This approach also acknowledges the need for the “public conversation about alcohol and other drugs” to be consistent, truthful, and sensitive to the issues of the majority of the students. Such conversation ensures that students get the feedback they need about normative behavior and that policies and practices support no, low, and moderate alcohol use as the community standard.

Consistent and fair-minded rules for all send the message that we belong to a community and are all subject to the same set of rules about substance use. Students, faculty, alumni, and visitors to the campus are on a level playing field. Few things are more divisive and more visible than a double standard for drinking.

As Carolyn Collins at the University of Arizona put it: “If you read one thing in the *Wildcat*, but your creative writing teacher, a police officer, or university tailgate drinking rules tell you something else, who do you believe?”

Moderation Skills Training is the most recent addition to our prevention and early intervention work. This model is based on the work of Alan Marlatt at the University of Washington, and the carefully researched curriculum developed by Alan Ebel at the University of Wisconsin at Stout.

The goal is to arm the fewer than 5 percent of our students who have substance-use problems with tools to reduce their risk and motivate them to change. The model includes training in safer drinking strategies and/or nondrinking habits. Students learn how to pace their intake, avoid intoxication, plan consumption, and recognize when it is time to stop drinking. The aim is to move them down the continuum of high-risk use to low-risk use or nonuse. We hope to have information to share soon about the efficacy of this strategy.

For additional information contact Korean Johannessen, Health Promotion and Preventive Services, Campus Health Services, University of Arizona, P.O. Box 210063, Tucson, AZ 85721-0063; Tel.: (520) 621-4251; Fax: (520) 621-8325; E-mail: [kjohanne@health.arizona.edu](mailto:kjohanne@health.arizona.edu).

## Utah's Student Consortium by Diana Hoppie

United Utah Schools (UUS) is a consortium of students from Alcohol and Drug Peer Prevention Teams representing 11 colleges and universities throughout the state. These schools include private and public two- and four-year institutions.

UUS provides networking and training opportunities on a state level for Utah's peer team members, and a UUS advisor is paid through a regional minigrant from the Network of Colleges and Universities Committed to the Elimination of Drug and Alcohol Abuse. Two volunteer student co-chairs are selected each year by the consortium through application and letters of recommendation from their program directors. The co-chairs' primary responsibilities are to conduct meetings at which decisions are made regarding the activities of UUS. They also serve as a communication link between the various peer teams.

The UUS Executive Council includes one member from each school in Utah. Each council member signs a contractual commitment for one year of service. Dependable volunteers are important for maintaining continuity and delegating activities. Committee members agree to attend the meetings where future UUS conferences and activities are planned. They share ideas to improve prevention programs on their campuses that are then taken back to be implemented in their schools. UUS meetings are held in connection with the Utah State Substance Abuse Prevention directors' meetings every other month, thus reducing the costs of travel for students.

Membership in UUS gives students great experiences, including training and networking connections

on a state level. This year the UUS schedule consists of a fall conference, spring service rally, monthly newsletters, and UUS Executive Committee meetings.

The United Utah Schools Fall Conference was held October 2–3, 1998, at Utah Valley State College. Participants addressed the theme Strengthening UUS in team-building experiences, workshops, brainstorming sessions, and table displays highlighting successes from each school. A Prejudice Reduction Workshop addressing differences and challenging prejudices was a popular session.

Future activities include a spring service project that stems from an activity held last year during spring break when UUS representatives gathered together in St. George to sell mocktails and hamburgers to the spring break crowd. They also distributed educational materials addressing drug and alcohol issues.

UUS deals with funding obstacles in several ways. Its major source of money is a grant from the Utah Department of Public Safety. This grant supports the fall conference, spring service rally, and a monthly newsletter. (A minimum registration fee covered the cost of T-shirts for the fall conference.) Each participating school also pays yearly dues in an amount based on school size.

UUS is effective because the directors of the drug and alcohol programs at participating campuses support it. The benefits of networking and training make this consortium a positive and worthwhile program.

Diana Hoppie is the UUS advisor at the University of Utah Alcohol and Drug Center, 201 S. 1460 E. Room 328, Salt Lake City, UT 84112; Tel.: (801) 581-7776; E-mail: [d.hoppie@m.cc.utah.edu](mailto:d.hoppie@m.cc.utah.edu).



## How to Join

To join the Network, the president of your college or university must submit a letter indicating the institution's commitment to implement the Network's Standards on your campus. Please include the name, address, and phone number of the contact person for the institution. Mail the letter to:

### **The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention**

Education Development Center, Inc.

55 Chapel Street

Newton, MA 02458-1060

or fax to: 617-928-1537

The Network is committed to helping member institutions promote a healthy campus environment by decreasing alcohol and other drug abuse.

# "Be Vocal, Be Visible, Be Visionary: A Video Report from the Field"

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention formed the Presidents Leadership Group to bring national attention to alcohol and other drug prevention on college campuses. "A Report from the Field" features the Group's recommendations and shows how college officials can be vocal, visible, and visionary about alcohol and other drug problems.

Through interviews with students, college officials, prevention specialists, business owners, and community members, the video describes three spheres of action for college presidents: (1) change on campus, (2) change in the campus-community environment surrounding the school, and (3) change in state-level policies that have an impact on what happens on campus.



The video highlights innovative and effective prevention strategies in academic programming, student social events and residences, and campus and community partnerships taking place across a range of colleges and universities.

"Student alcohol abuse is a problem shared by all institutions of higher education. College presidents should openly and publicly acknowledge that alcohol and other drug abuse problems exist and then reach out to campus, community, and state-level groups to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for prevention." —Presidents Leadership Group

Additional copies of the video are available for \$29.95 each from the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention. For more information, please visit the Center's Website at [www.edc.org/hec/](http://www.edc.org/hec/) or call 1-800-676-1730.

## Survey Findings, continued

- For those who reported only attending fraternity/sorority events, 58 percent of the men and 46 percent of the women reported episodes of "binge drinking," and an average weekly consumption of eight and four drinks, respectively.
- Students not involved in Greek life reported the lowest drinking rates. Forty-two percent of the men and 26 percent of the women reported "binge drinking" episodes. Non-Greeks reported an average weekly consumption of six drinks for men and two drinks for women.

While a number of fraternities have adopted alcohol-free policies for their houses and parties and have implemented other measures to reduce hazardous drinking by members, Wechsler says: "I think fraternities are so mired in alcohol, they're so into it that they can't give it up."

### Other News

In terms of adverse consequences related to alcohol use, the Harvard study found that 22.5 percent of those surveyed engaged in unplanned sexual activity while under the influence of alcohol, and

35.8 percent drove after imbibing.

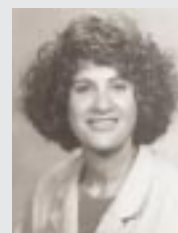
As for the secondary effects of heavy drinking, the majority of non-"binge drinkers" again reported serious disruptions related to their imbibing peers: sexual harassment, accidents and injuries, loud outbursts in dorm rooms in the middle of the night, and vomit-covered bathrooms.

The study did not say which specific colleges had the most drinkers, though schools in the Northeast and Midwest tended to produce more drinking. Students at historically black and women's colleges, as well as those at commuter schools without residence halls, tended to drink less.

"If colleges are to have an impact on their alcohol problems, they must change this drinking culture drastically," Wechsler said. He also pointed out, however, that half of all college "binge drinkers" began their heavy consumption while still in high school.

The Harvard study is reported in the September 1998 issue of the *Journal of American College Health*. The Core Institute report appeared in the January 1998 issue of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*.

## In Memoriam



### Susan Grossman

With great sadness we share the passing of Dr. Susan Grossman, who served as the director of Prevention Programs and Services at the Institute of Substance Abuse Studies, University of Virginia.

Of her many contributions, Dr. Grossman may be best known for her commitment to and passion for prevention work on behalf of student athletes. The APPLE peer program that she and Joe Geick developed at UVA has been widely and successfully disseminated to many college campuses across the country.

Dr. Grossman also consulted with the Department of Education for many years, most recently as a Center Associate for the Higher Education Center.

Her important work did not go unrecognized. In 1994 she was awarded the "Making a Difference Award," the Governor's Award for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Dr. Grossman was known as Susan to most of us. She always made time to assist others, and her time, passion, and energy always seemed limitless. Her battle with cancer was unknown by most. She fought against the disease with elegance and bravery, calling little attention to herself during the process. And through it all, she was still always just a phone call away, ready to offer advice when asked.

Susan will be missed, but her legacy will continue to inspire many of us for years to come. A mentor, friend, colleague, and sage—people such as Susan Grossman are precious. Let us celebrate her life's accomplishments as we grieve our loss.

Donations may be sent to the University of Virginia Fund designated for the Institute for Substance Abuse Studies c/o Bonnie Ford, P.O. Box 3446, Charlottesville, VA 22903.



## Our Mission

The mission of the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention is to assist institutions of higher education in developing alcohol and other drug (AOD) prevention policies and programs that will foster students' academic and social development and promote campus and community safety.

## Get in Touch

Additional information can be obtained by contacting:

### **The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention**

Education Development Center, Inc.

55 Chapel Street

Newton, MA 02458-1060

Website: [www.edc.org/hec/](http://www.edc.org/hec/)

Phone: 800-676-1730

Fax: 617-928-1537

E-mail: [HigherEdCtr@edc.org](mailto:HigherEdCtr@edc.org)

## How We Can Help

The Center offers an integrated array of services to help people at colleges and universities adopt effective AOD prevention strategies:

- Training and professional development activities
- Resources, referrals, and consultations
- Publication and dissemination of prevention materials
- Support for the Network of Colleges and Universities  
Committed to the Elimination of Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- Assessment, evaluation, and analysis activities

## Higher Education Center Training Opportunities

The Center's two-day Team Training event brings together teams from IHEs and their local communities to address alcohol and other drug issues on their campus. Team members represent key campus and community systems such as AOD coordinators, senior administrators, faculty, other student service personnel, athletes, public safety/security, student leaders, community representatives, and others. The training provides an opportunity for teams to develop coalition-based action plans. Call the Center to participate in one of the following events. *Dates and locations are subject to change, so please check our Website for up-to-date information.*

### **Upcoming Team Trainings**

April 26–27, 1999 • Little Rock, Ark.

May 19–20, 1999 • Sioux Falls, S.Dak.

October 6–7, 1999 • Augsburg, Minn.

**Catalyst** is a publication of the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention funded by the U.S. Department of Education under contract number SS95013001. Views expressed are those of the contractor. No official support or endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education is intended or should be inferred.

Director of Publications: Karen Zweig

Editor: Barbara E. Ryan

Production Manager: Anne McAuliffe

Graphic Designer: Kay Baker

Illustrator: Jeanine Merrigan

Center Director: William DeJong

Staff: Kay Baker, Elizabeth Collins, Tom Colthurst, Michelle Cook, Maggie Cretella, Laurie Davidson, Joel Epstein, Michael Gilbreath, Laura Gomberg, Theresa Hassen, Andrew Hill, Rob Hylton, Irma Iturralde, Linda Langford, Peter Leis, Michelle Maillet, Anne McAuliffe, Catherine Potts, Judith Robinson, Michael Rosati, Barbara Ryan, Karen Zweig

Social & Health Services, Ltd.  
11426 Rockville Pike, Suite 100  
Rockville, MD 20852

*Return Service Requested*

**BULK RATE**

U.S. Postage

**PAID**

Permit no. 259

Columbia, MD 21046



Funded by the U.S. Department of Education

If you are receiving this newsletter in someone else's name or are receiving multiple copies, please notify us so that we may update our mailing list.